1.2 AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS (LISTING OF CLAIMS):

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for assessing skeletal growth of a subject other than an adult in congestive heart failure, comprising measuring ~~the level of~~ NT-CNP in a biological ~~sample~~fluid from the subject, and comparing ~~the level against the~~ this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a control population for which at least a first skeletal growth information is known, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level of NT-CNP in the subject from the mean ~~control~~ level of NT-CNP in the control population is indicative of abnormal skeletal growth.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the biological ~~sample~~fluid is plasma or whole blood.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, where said subject is a pre-adult.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said subject is a pre-pubescent child or an infant.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein said subject is a neonate and the ~~sample~~fluid comprises ~~is a~~ cord blood ~~sample~~.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said subject is undergoing a treatment regimen, which may impact on skeletal growth in said subject.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said subject is exposed to chemicals or other external factors which may impact on skeletal growth in said subject.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and ~~a binding agent~~an antibody that selectively binds NT-CNP.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein said ~~binding agent is an~~ antibody is an~~or~~ antibody fragment that selectively binds NT-CNP.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8~~9~~, wherein said ~~binding agent~~antibody is a monoclonal antibody or a monoclonal antibody fragment.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the NT-CNP to which the ~~binding agent~~antibody selectively binds comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the NT-CNP comprises proCNP(1-50).

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein binding of NT-CNP is measured ~~using~~with antibodies or antibody fragments that are immobilized to a solid phase.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for predicting ~~the~~ skeletal growth potential of a subject other than an adult in congestive heart failure, comprising measuring ~~the level of~~ NT-CNP in a biological ~~sample~~fluid from said subject, and comparing this measured level of~~the level against the mean~~ NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from~~level of~~ a control population that has attained maximum skeletal growth and predicting from the NT-CNP level in the subject, skeletal growth potential of the subject.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for predicting ~~the~~ skeletal age of a subject other than an adult in congestive heart failure, comprising measuring ~~the level of~~ NT-CNP in a biological ~~sample~~fluid from said subject and comparing this measured level of~~the level~~

~~against the mean~~ NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from~~level of~~ a control population of known skeletal ages, and predicting from the NT-CNP level in the subject, the skeletal age of the subject.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for diagnosing a skeletal disease or disorder in a subject other than an adult in congestive heart failure, comprising measuring ~~the level of~~ NT-CNP in a biological ~~sample~~fluid from said subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a ~~the level against the~~ mean NT-CNP level from a control population, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level from the mean control level is indicative of a skeletal disease or disorder.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein said biological ~~sample~~fluid is plasma or whole blood.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein said subject is a ~~pro~~pre-adult.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said subject is a pre-pubescent child or an infant.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein said subject is a neonate and said biological ~~sample~~fluid comprises cord blood.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and ~~a binding agent~~an antibody or antibody fragment that selectively binds NT-CNP.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21~~22~~, wherein said ~~binding agent~~antibody or antibody fragment is a monoclonal antibody or monoclonal antibody fragment.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the NT-CNP to which said ~~binding agent~~antibody or antibody fragment selectively binds comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein said NT-CNP comprises proCNP(1-50).

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein binding of said NT-CNP is measured ~~using~~with an antibody or antibody fragment that is~~antibodies or antibody fragments that are~~ immobilized to a solid phase.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein where a significant deviation from the mean control level is found in the ~~sample~~fluid, the method comprises a further step of comparing the measured NT-CNP level with one or more mean NT-CNP levels from populations having known skeletal diseases or disorders to make a more accurate diagnosis of ~~the~~a specific disease or disorder.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein said skeletal disease or disorder is selected from the group consisting of congenital disorders, delayed developmental disorders and advanced development syndromes.

29. (Currently Amended) A method of monitoring skeletal growth in a subject other than an adult in congestive heart failure, comprising:

(a) measuring the level of NT-CNP in a first biological ~~sample~~fluid from said subject and measuring the level of NT-CNP in a second biological ~~sample~~fluid, wherein said second biological ~~sample~~fluid is taken from the same subject as said first ~~sample~~biological fluid but at a later date; and

(b) comparing the levels of NT-CNP in said first and said second ~~samples~~biological fluids, wherein a significant change in the level of NT-CNP in said second ~~sample~~biological fluid from the level of NT-CNP in said first ~~sample~~biological fluid indicates a change in the rate of skeletal growth in said subject.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein said subject is undergoing a treatment regimen that may impact skeletal growth of said subject.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6 or claim 30, wherein said treatment regimen involves ~~the~~ administration of glucocorticoids to said subject.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31, wherein said subject is undergoing treatment for asthma or other chronic allergic states.

33. (Currently Amended) A kit for assessing skeletal growth, diagnosing a skeletal disease or disorder, or predicting skeletal growth potential or skeletal age in a subject other than an adult in congestive heart failure, said kit comprising:

(a) means for measuring the level of NT-CNP in a biological ~~sample~~fluid obtained from said subject, comprising ~~a binding agent~~an antibody or an antibody fragment that selectively binds to a NT-CNP molecule selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81), and which can be used to quantitatively measure NT-CNP; and

(b) instructions for assessing or monitoring said skeletal growth, predicting said skeletal growth potential or said skeletal age, or diagnosing said skeletal disease or disorder in said subject from the NT-CNP level measured in said biological ~~sample~~fluid.

34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently Amended) The kit of claim [[34]]33, wherein said ~~binding agent~~antibody or said antibody fragment is a monoclonal antibody or a fragment thereof.

36. (Previously Presented) An NT-CNP binding agent that selectively binds a proCNP(1-50), ~~or proCNP(1750)~~a proCNP(1-103), a proCNP(1-50), a proCNP(1-81), or a proCNP(51-81) peptide.

37-43. (Canceled)

Please add the following new claims:

44. (New) A method for assessing skeletal growth of a pre-adult subject, comprising measuring NT-CNP in a biological fluid from the subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a control population for which at least a first skeletal growth information is known, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level of NT-CNP in the subject from the mean level of NT-CNP in the control population is indicative of abnormal skeletal growth.

45. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody or an antibody binding fragment that selectively binds NT-CNP.

46. (New) The method of claim 45, wherein said antibody or said antibody binding fragment selectively binds an NT-proCNP peptide.

47. (New) The method of claim 46, wherein said NT-proCNP peptide comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

48. (New) A method for assessing skeletal growth of a subject suspected of having a skeletal disease or disorder, comprising measuring NT-CNP in a biological fluid from the subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a control population for which at least a first skeletal growth information is known, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level of NT-CNP in the subject from the mean level of NT-CNP in the control population is indicative of abnormal skeletal growth in said subject.

49. (New) The method of claim 48, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody or an antibody binding fragment that selectively binds NT-CNP.

50. (New) The method of claim 49, wherein said antibody or said antibody binding fragment selectively binds an NT-proCNP peptide.

51. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein said NT-proCNP peptide comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).